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Cancelarich, John oral history interview

Don Nicoll

Interview with John Cancelarich by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Cancelarich, John

Interviewer
Nicoll, Don

Date
October 9, 1998

Place
Presque Isle, Maine

ID Number
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Biographical Note

John Cancelarich was born in New York City on April 8, 1930. His parents were from Austria-Hungary. His father was an asbestos worker, a Republican, and an ardent union supporter. He had one younger sister (a school teacher in Westwood, NJ). He was raised in NYC and attended Stuyvesant High School and NYU College of Engineering (Bachelors and Masters). He worked for American Cyanamide Company (a pharmaceutical industry) and was drafted and sent to Fort Dix, and then to Fort McLellan, Alabama for chemical school, then sent to Pine Bluff, Arkansas where he worked in biological warfare and met his wife, Johnny. He then worked for Vahlsing, Inc. in Easton, Maine, running a potato processing plant. He and his wife have four children, two of whom still live in Maine.

Scope and Content Note

The interview includes discussions of: the pharmaceutical industry; the Wagner Act; the influence of Mayor La Guardia in NYC; stories about Freddy Vahlsing; his time spent in jail on charges of violating pharmaceutical patents; the involvement of Vahlsing Inc. and George Mitchell in a scandal over the pollution of the Prestile Stream; Muskie's involvement with the start of a sugar beet processing plant; selling part of Vahlsing Inc. to Arm & Hammer; the Area Redevelopment Administration; the 1968 Democratic National Convention; the UMPI speech;

problems with the Food and Drug Administration; a conversation with Kitty Dukakis about her first marriage; and Muskie's influence on the Democratic Party between 1954-1968.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is Friday, the 9th of October, 1998. We are at John Cancelarich's home, 294 Conant Road in Presque Isle, Maine, very near Easton, interviewing John for the Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Project. John, would you state your name and the date and place of your birth, please?

John Cancelarich: Yes, my name is John Cancelarich. I was born in New York City on April 8, 1930.

DN: John, could you give us a brief overview of your life and career?

JC: Sure, I was . . . First of all, I'm a son of immigrant parents. My father is an immigrant from Austria-Hungary; my mother I consider an immigrant even though she was born in the United States. Her parents died when she was very young. And just before WWII she was literally shipped back to Austria-Hungary, right on a small island off the Yugoslav coast, and was raised that way. So I'm a product of immigrant parents. I was raised in New York City; all my major education is there. I went to a local grade school, went to a place called Stuyvesant High School in New York City, and then went to NYU College of Engineering. And all my degrees are in chemical engineering, both my Bachelor's and Master's.

My career started in my junior summer year working for American Cyanamide Company in the pharmaceutical industry, and I worked in what they called the pre-engineering training program, which helped pay my senior year program. [I] graduated and they hired me. I worked there a couple years in the pharmaceutical productions, then was drafted and went to basic training in Fort Dix, went down to the chemical school in Fort McLellan, Alabama, and eventually was transferred to Pine Bluff, Arkansas where I worked in biological warfare, ran a shift down there. I was the only military man. The other, there were many military men, but I was the only one running a ship; the other three guys were civilians. I was fortunate. One fortunate thing down there, I met my wife Johnny, down there. Johnny from Pine Bluff, Arkansas. And that's the

lady in the other room.

I left Cyanamide on an interesting project. I basically, we found out . . . One day I was reading literature and I looked in the literature and it said that 1939 just before WWII started Benito Mussolini took all the patent laws, all the pharmaceutical patent laws in Italy and he voided them. He simply said that they're not existent here. So, working in the pharmaceutical industry, I came up with this crazy idea, well, if there's no laws there, I could copy what I'm doing. Well, we did. I quit the company, went to Europe, and we started making . . . When I was twenty-four years old, I had no money. When I was twenty-six, I had four hundred thousand dollars. When I was twenty-eight I was broke again. And the result of that was eighty-nine days in the federal prison on a conspiracy charge for violation of certain laws. The interesting part about that was that when Senator Estes Kefauver, if you can remember him, he picked up some of the pharmaceutical investigations after he did the crime hearings. And unfortunately he died. But I was scheduled to appear with, for him, and bring out some of my history in the pharmaceutical industry, which, by the way has recent-, not recently, twenty-five years ago, was written up in a book called The Million Dollar Bug [*sic* Bugs] by Michael Pearson, published by Knopf and Sons.

But, so I came back from Europe, broke, no money, and walked around New York. And like anything else, you start looking for work. See, I had all these legal problems. And a guy calls me up and he says, "John, there's a guy who wants a chemist in Maine in a food plant for quality problems." And I said, "Fine." So I called up this guy, he said, "Yeah, come on down and see me." This turned out to be Freddy Vahlsing. So I went down there and we started talking and he said, "You know how to make french fries?" I said, "No." He said, "What do you know about french fries?" I says, "I just know I like them when I eat them." And he says, "Can you make golden french fries?" Well, by that time I was getting a little tired and I said, "Look, Freddy, I'll make the damn things striped if you want." And he screamed at me and said, "That's the man I want." "So," he said, "you go up to Maine for two weeks, and here's your ticket." So I went up to Maine for two weeks, stayed at the Fort Fairfield Plymouth Hotel, and started working at Vahlsing Inc. up here in Easton, Maine. After two weeks he said, "Well, stay another two weeks." And then it was three months. And then finally he says, "Go run my plant for me." So I came up to Maine for a, on a two week consulting deal and thirty-three years, or thirty-two years later, I'm still here and by choice. We've had the pleasure of raising four children up here and living in a beautiful area, at least I consider it.

People . . . One thing that was interesting, that might be interesting is that, in spite of all my trouble with the pharmaceutical industry, I did some very interesting investigation for them behind the Iron Curtain, which some day I hope is released, and people can talk about some of the things that we found out for the pharmaceutical industry and the United States Army and the CIA. For some reason it's sitting, it still hasn't been released. Why? I don't know.

DN: This was back in the '50s?

JC: Yes, in the, actually '60s. Yeah, very early '60s. I came up here in 19-, December of '62, and I've been here ever since. So actually that puts me up about thirty-seven years up here.

DN: You said that your parents were both from Austria-Hungary, your mother having been born here of parents from there. What was it, what was your father's occupation?

JC: My father was a, he liked to call himself an asbestos worker. And I thought, when I was a kid, I used to embarrass him. I said, "Well, he does insulation work." I thought that was a little classier. But he was proud. Papa was one of these guys, Don, that had a love affair, very conservative, but he had a love affair with the union and labor movement. And I can still remember and, I can still remember when Papa saw a picket line, that was sacred. You don't cross a picket line, you respect it. If the people are hungry you bring them food, you bring them coffee if they're cold and stuff like that. And yet I can still remember him voting for [Wendell] Willkie and people like that, see. Very...

DN: He was a Republican in his politics but an ardent union supporter.

JC: Yeah, an ardent union supporter and also fairly liberal in his views on labor, on Workmens' Comp, which was practically nonexistent in those days. You know, support of workers, rights of workers, ah, you know, the Wagner Act and all those things, he just held it high. You know, there were certain things that he had a lot . . . one was the picket line, the other was the American flag. I can remember we lived in a small apartment, we hardly had any rooms. But we had an American flag, and that American flag was always folded properly and had its own drawer. And you didn't put socks in that drawer in my house, see. So that's the way, we were raised that way.

DN: How many children in the family?

JC: There's two. My sister is one year, a little over a year younger than I am and she's a school teacher in Westwood, New Jersey. She's still single. She had the honor of being national Spanish teacher of the year a few years ago, and got to sail with President Reagan on the aircraft carrier the day they dedicated Miss Liberty in New York harbor. But she's a, I consider her right of Ivan the Terrible, politically, see. And the reason I use that term is, George Mitchell once labeled me left of Lenin, which he still, when he sees me, he laughs about that comment. But we've had a lot of fun up here and great place to raise kids.

DN: How many children did you and Johnny have?

JC: We have four, we had four in five years. And the interesting thing is that one year, Joe, the oldest, decided he was going to go to graduate school, he was at Notre Dame. And so we had the pleasure of having four kids in college all at the same time, all at out-of-state schools. None of my kids went to school in Maine. And I was running a bankrupt company in Presque Isle, I mean, getting it out of Chapter 11. So it was interesting. But the thing that amazed me is the incredible amount of support you get up here from people.

I mean, I could go on and on about what small people have done for me. One time, people didn't realize that I was still getting a check when I was trying to get that company out of bankruptcy,

and all the workers were laid off. And this old French guy come right to this door around here, in fact you could look at it now, and he had a chicken. And he said, "I made a mistake, I baked two chickens. I thought maybe you'd want one." And that's the only way he felt comfortable getting a chicken to me. Poor guy must have thought I was starving or something, but that's what happened. People came here and worked with us and helped us and everything else, see. In fact, this house, as you can see it's a pretty big house, it was built by people at the plant that came here at night and helped me build it. I didn't have any money in those days when I first started, see.

DN: What led you to your brand of Democratic philosophy?

JC: Probably, well, if you look at me, I went to school and I'm small. And I always, you know, I was always an underdog in sports and I just pounded hard. And I just felt, I thought the Democrats to me were underdogs in everything in the days I grew up, except in New York City they were quite powerful. What's interesting is, I wasn't a Democrat until I came here. I was really a liberal. If you remember, New York had a fairly liberal party in those days. And what you did, they, you know, in most cases, they did support the Democratic candidate; they really didn't run many of their own candidates. The only damn Republican that really turned me on in the old days was Fiorello La Guardia, who I thought was a fascinating guy and did a hell of a lot for the city.

DN: That's right, you were growing up when he was mayor.

JC: Yeah, yeah, I can still remember him, I think I can, reading the comics during a newspaper strike and all that. But we did listen, I can still remember, we did listen to Roosevelt's fireside chats; that I know we listened to. And we did listen to his Sunday programs because my father was a great radio man. And what was interesting in our house that, if the National Anthem was turned on to a station, you did not turn it off until it was finished. That was, you know, if you did that, that was heresy in my house. That's the way Papa raised us.

DN: Now, what was it that gave him his passionate feeling of patriotism?

JC: He, well, it's hard to say because he came from Austria. And of course, you know, he saw the problems there. But the way he came to the United States is, he came off a Merchant Marine ship. Austria had a Merchant Marine, he just literally walked off the boat. But I can remember, we used to go to vote. Papa would go to vote, I was too small. And my father used to put on a three-piece suit, Don, to vote. And if you remember in the old days they'd even put on a gold chain and they'd put the chain, and he would put that gold chain and he would go to vote, see, and I would go with him. He'd say, "Come with me." And he'd be there and the polls in New York opened at six a.m. and Papa would be in line about quarter to six. And I'd say, "What are we waiting for, Papa, let's go home, we'll come back." "No, no, no, we're going to vote." And one time, I'll never forget this and I like to tell people this story, that we were in the booth and he would say, "Okay, pull this one down and pull this one down," and I looked and he had tears in his eyes. I said, "What are you crying for Papa?" Just a kid. He said, "Some day you'll understand." And I think I probably did understand a few years later on.

DN: When did he come to the States?

JC: Nineteen-oh-eight [1908].

DN: So he came before WWI.

JC: Yeah, yeah. See, and the problem was that Momma was shipped back in about 1912, 1913, just before the war, so all she grew up with starvation, see. My mother grew up, in my house, if she put food on the table, she wouldn't eat until everyone was practically finished. And we could never break her of that habit. When I started getting a few dollars, I took her out for dinner, which was a waste of time; she would order a cheese sandwich because that was the cheapest thing on the menu, see. That's the way she was.

DN: Now, were her political views similar to your dad?

JC: Yes. She was probably, she didn't vote as often as Dad, see. And she liked city politics and she liked what Roosevelt was doing, but she really didn't, you know, she wasn't as active. Papa went to meetings and went to, made sure they voted. And I remember walking with him in a 'we-want-Willkie' chant parade and things like that.

DN: Was political discussion part of the dinner table conversation?

JC: No, at our dinner table it was just about silence and we ate. When we finished, the answer was yes, see. And Papa had some real reservations about some of the work, some of the things happening in the New Deal. He understood the feeding the people, but he had certain concerns about the WPA program and the CCC corps. But I think later, when he got to see, we traveled up in New York state, we started seeing some of the bridges that they built. And if you go into post offices up there, Don, you can see the murals that the artists drew and stuff like that. And I think he, years later he began to see that it was a boondoggle that worked, is the way I like to describe it.

DN: Why did your sister end up in a very different place?

JC: In a teaching position?

DN: Politically.

JC: Oh, politically, I don't really know. She's very conservative, and yet she's very close to her students and she has a real sensitivity even to black kids, see, which sometimes, you know, maybe a terrible thing to say. I don't see the conservatives worried about the minorities as much as I hope we do. But she is tough with them. I was one time in a class, she invited me in. And some black kid said, "Well you know this and that, we don't have this" . . . And she said: "Stop. My father came off a boat, couldn't speak a word of English, so don't tell me about getting in. So you just be like him and do what he did." And they've got to like her in things like that.

I walked, I remember one day we were walking in one of the malls down in New Jersey and all at once, God, I thought she was getting mugged. A guy come up and grabbed her and then I seen it obviously wasn't a mugging. And then finally she gave the guy a kiss on the side of the neck and he hugged her. And I said, "What was that?" She says, "See that kid there, he was one of my students", and they were pushing him real hard and he just wasn't college material. And one day, my car broke down. He said, "I can fix that." She had a Volkswagen, a Beetle, she always had foreign cars, see. But anyway, he fixed it. So she started saying, "Well, do you know how to fix this stuff?" And, oh, yeah, fix this, and she gave him some other job. And she said, "this kid's just a quasi-genius in fixing cars. He's in the wrong field." His family got furious that she was trying to convince him to get out of that. So the kid follows her suggestions and gets into a job and three years later the guy sells him the business. And the guy's making about three times the teacher's salary right now, so he's as happy as hell, see. But she's very outspoken, very outspoken, very much like my Johnny does.

DN: Now, when you came to Maine to work for Freddy Vahlsing, you were a New York liberal. Did you become active in the Democratic Party here early on?

JC: Yeah, I probably, I became active that, I came here in the winter time and I think the next spring, which would be the spring of '63. I went into, did some work up there and I went to a meeting, and, God, within . . . Floyd was elected chairman of the meeting and I was elected secretary. And one of the first things I did was, I didn't know the area, I took one of my fellows who worked for me, guy named Fitzherbert, and we went up and down the county and I introduced myself to the chairmen of the individual towns. And I went into towns like Sherman and Island Falls and Dyer Brook and all those areas down there and up in the valley. And I said, "I like what I see." You know, there was a warmth there, that people greeting me and things like that, see. And I think that's what started . . . .

In fact, there was a rather somewhat of an embarrassing incident that happened at, remember Bill Caldwell? He used to write, he wrote a lot of stories, not a lot, he wrote five or six stories about me. And the first one he wrote was, he said he found it interesting, that many letters coming from the Aroostook Democratic Party, and I had printed up (I went down and had stuff printed up) were from Freddy Vahlsing's plant. What I forgot to do, Don, was, we had one of these Pitney Bowles machines and on the other side it said, you know, "buy french fries", or some kind of mini-advertisement. I forgot to take that off, and when I sent all the damn stuff out it had that on it. And somehow one of the Republicans picked it up and Bill Caldwell made a comment about it in his paper, see. So Freddy says, "Why the hell", you know. I says, "Freddy, these guys could help us", and stuff like that. At that time, when I first came up here, Freddy really wasn't involved in any politics at all. We were just trying to get a plant started. Most of his fighting was with his own father.

DN: That being exposed to Freddy and his father in that corporate development must have been something.

JC: Well, yeah. There's an incident that I was down, there's a lot of stories you can tell about

Freddy. But there's one that, one day I was, we had a meeting. And this is when we got into sugar beets and we'll get into that again. But we were, the old man, I like to call him Mr. Vahlsing, picked me up and we're driving down to Mars Hill. And I said, "Hey Mr. Vahlsing, I bought an airplane." He says, "You did?" I says, "Yeah." He says, "Well, that's good, you can fly around, get to meetings." I says, "Yeah." And he said, "What did you pay for it?" I says, "A thousand dollars." He jammed on the brakes and he pulled over to the side. He said, "You're fired." I said, "Fired? What the hell did I do?" He says, "You'll be dead," he says, "my instruments cost more than a thousand, my altimeter cost a thousand dollars, and you're buying a whole plane?" He says, "You've got no chance to live," stuff like that, "you're fired." I says, "Good enough." So we went down to Mars Hill and Freddy and I got into another argument.

Now Freddy probably fired me an average of three to four times a week, which I never took anything seriously, so. One time, he starts like that, I says, "Freddy, you're out in left field, you shouldn't report them." "You're through, get out of here, you're fired." I says, "Fine, you can't fire me." "What do you mean I can't fire you?" I says, "Your father fired me about a half an hour ago." Don, the two of them started an argument, I says, "Well, which one has the right to fire me?" The two of them started an argument on who had the right to fire me. In the meantime, I says, "Look, I'm busy, I'll get back to the plant." Freddy says, "Okay, yeah." And the two of them are just screeching at each other, who had the right to fire me. But that, it was that type of carnival atmosphere. I mean, we got a lot done but there was this lunacy that prevailed through that whole, through those years, after years. It was different.

DN: Your role was managing the plant.

JC: Well my role, I started off in the french fry operation, and then I went . . . First I started in quality control and I was there, you know, when I had the two-week period before. After a week or so George Philbrook, who was running the plant, says, "John's in charge of the plant itself, the operation of the plant. I'll do the potato buying, don't worry about the sales or the shipping. But I'll be, you know . . . You're in charge of running the plant and the personnel and the quality control and stuff like that." And it lasted two years like that. We were just getting ready to get into sugar beets. What was interesting was at that time I had my trouble with the federal people. I had done all my, I'd done a lot of work with the federal people, and then I worked with the pharmaceutical company. He says, "You know with all the help you've got no problem, you'll never go to jail." Well, that was wrong. I went for eighty-nine days.

DN: When was this?

JC: In '64, yeah, eighty-nine days. All I did was teach school there, I taught black guys and I had a, I'll tell you a quick story about that. I was in this prison. They said teach school and I said, "Yeah, I want to teach. I don't want to sit around doing nothing." So I never saw discrimination as much as I saw it in jail, by the way, but that's another story. So I started teaching school and finally word got out. I was sentenced for six months but I got out in eighty-nine days, see. And a big black fellow, never forget this, he come up to me and he says, "John, I appreciate your teaching me." I says, "Right, I didn't mind." He says, "Let me know if you need some, you know, you want to get somebody busted or leg broken or somebody put away,

let me know." And it kind of shocked me and then I realized that was the only thing in life he could offer me. This kid had been in prison since he was like fourteen. He was thirty years old now, big strapping guy, probably could play football in the NFL. And that was the only thing in life he could offer me, go out and smash somebody up. And I tell that story because if you treat people like animals long enough, they become animals, literally. And this guy had become an animal, this is what he understood. He still was, and yet he still was thankful enough to offer that to me, an offer that obviously you can't accept. But I never forgot that story and I never forgot, you know, him, just as serious as can be, making that offer to me.

Yeah, I taught school. Most of my students were black kids. You know, here we are in prison, who else goes to prison but black kids? But I was teaching math, this Trackenberg system. And I was having trouble with the black kids, explaining multiplication and stuff like that, and fractions. And then one day it hit me. I says, you know, "Let me try something." I said, "Look, it's, you're on a bet. You're betting five to two that you can run faster than this guy, and you put down four dollars. How much do you get?" Bang, the answer come up right away. Then I realized I was talking a language they didn't understand, but the minute I went down to their basic level, or up to their level, whatever it might be, they could understand. And I try to remember that in my management deals, you know, remember who you're speaking to and be on their level. It may be above yours, without realizing it, but get to their level and you get a lot of things done. And I learned how, working with these guys, the minute you get to their level, there's communications there. But you start doing absolute fractions and standard chemical engineering terms or math terms, you know, they don't understand it, and they don't want to, see.

DN: What other lessons did you bring back with you from the prison experience?

JC: Well, number one, that I developed a real understanding how blacks have very little chance in our society without some substantial changes. And this is in the '60s. I saw, I was given a job to teach school; that was at night, that was volunteer work. But I was put in an engineering office, see. And you looked out there and the blacks were handling the garbage, sweeping floors, stuff like that, see. In the bunks, the white guys, we're getting all the bunks we wanted. The blacks were in a corner, it was shady or dark or things like that. Every time there was trouble, and there wasn't that much because it was kind of an open prison with mostly white-collar crimes, the black guys were automatically called in first. And I also, and the other thing was that I learned that most of these guys had never had opportunity. They grew up in a system that, you know, they were taught to steal. And I see it.

We bring up about thirty black kids a year from Roxbury, you know where that is in Boston? And Dorchester, that's another. They're black communities. Johnny runs the program. And I tell another story, here I go again. But, I had breakfast with these kids about 8:30. I stay over so they, so I can have breakfast with them and talk to them, and make sure that everything's fine. And she says . . . I get up and like you, I pick up my attache case and I'm going to work. She says, "Where are you going Mr. C?" I says, "Sharon, I'm going to work." She says, "You went yesterday." Well, I walked out the door laughing. But as I was driving, I realized that this girl doesn't understand, no one's told her the normal thing is go to work five days a week. So I came

back that night and I started talking to her. And she has, you know, the guy living with her mother, they talk, and this is a terrible thing, they're talking about having three fathers, some of the younger ones. Their natural father, who most of them don't know by now, the person that their mother married, and the third person is the guy living there now, who has obviously the greatest influence right now. But if he doesn't want to go to work, she doesn't go to school. They put on popcorn, they watch television, everything's fine. See, no one's teaching her that this is not the way to get ahead.

Another thing was, and I've used and I use this at a Martin Luther Day celebration up at Loring when the base was open, when they had a black group, and they invited me to talk about this program. And I said, "I tell them about the story in school," but, I says, "let me tell you what's the problem that I see with black kids." I says, "You know, we bring up these kids, and we bring them up here. We might bring them up exactly the same age as your kids, because, you know, each year when they come back you want them each to be six and seven and eight and nine." And what happens, Don, is as these kids come up you can see each year your kid pulling further and further away -- social graces, social manners, skills, you know, language abilities and things like that which you don't . . . And unless you see it year by year . . . And then the third year you look back and say, "My God, Joe's a full year ahead of Joshua," or somebody like that. And that's a concern we have. And I don't ever solve it.

I used to be, if you want to see how the welfare system isn't working, come up here for a week, or one day during these times of year. And the kids, Johnny will tell them to turn off the hot water. And the kids say, "Well, don't you get fuel stamps?" Or, "Let's go to McDonald's, can we use this or that?" It's just that, it's a problem we have. And I, you know, I used to be a great supporter of welfare; now I'm saying, we've got to help these people. But I don't know how to do it any more. Something radically has to be done. It's not happening in our, you know, Republicans are not going to do it, I can tell you that now. It's just not in their blood. I tell people if I was super rich I'd be a Republican, because they represent people like that. And there's nothing wrong with that. It's just that we have to understand who they represent and who we hope our people represent.

DN: Did you have that feeling when you first came to Maine? About the Republicans and Democrats?

JC: Oh yeah, yeah. Probably not as strong. I think, see, I went to prison during the time I was up here. Freddy said, "Go ahead, and come back. Don't get in trouble and come on back." Had the job open for me and then, in fact didn't even go back to the potato plant. I went into the sugar operation as chief chemist, and then I ended up being chief operation officer, and eventually president of the damn thing, see.

DN: Let's talk about the sugar beet program first, and then I want to talk about politics and your encounters with Senator Muskie. What are your most vivid recollections about the development of the sugar project?

JC: The . . .Probably my most vivid recollection was how hard we worked and didn't get

anything done, and we failed. I would get up at, go in the plant at six in the morning, six and seven days a week, just to, the only thing I probably did that broke the pattern was go to mass on Sunday morning. You know, the crime of it is, my four kids grew up right under that, and I probably hardly didn't know them. And I think that's why I'm spoiling my grandkids to make up for time that I should have been spending with them. But that's my most vivid recollection, how hard we worked. An interesting story is . . . and the great contact we had with farmers and the Germans and the University of Maine and politicians and bankers. I mean, we just, I can remember, well, I'll tell you a little bit about all of them. One day Freddy comes in and, here we go, Senator Muskie wants me to build the sugar beet plant. Well, I wasn't too enthused about that, so, I'd heard about it and stuff like that. And I said, "Well, can they grow sugar beets up here?" "Oh, of course they can, no trouble." I says, "Okay. Well then let's, what the hell?" I was just, a chemical engineer is supposed to make the damn thing run and make it happen. So that was probably, you know . . . When you talk about Muskie, I come into three areas that I think of, one is the sugar beet program, one is the political arena, and the third is the Vietnam War, see, and the positions I took there and how I tied in with the Kennedy crowd and stuff like that. And worked against the senator, really, for awhile. And when I saw him, the last time I saw him was in Boston. We were both waiting for a business express and the damn thing was running a couple hours late. And he was, I was surprised how patient he was. And I said, "You remember those days?" He said, "John, I remember you very well. Yeah," he said. But it was interesting.

DN: What did Freddy tell you was the center of his motivation in starting the sugar beet program?

JC: They were the honorable ones in that we were, we had a chance, number one, we were going to have a sugar beet program. And the western boys, according to Freddy, came in, botched it up on purpose as Freddy would, as Freddy did say, and the senator wants to save it. He says, "Now these guys, this potato deal is limited in what it can really do, we're getting killed from the west." And this is thirty-three thousand acres, that was the magic number in those days, we could get thirty three-thousand acres of sugar beets. And I made a couple of calls and I found out . . . The thing that interested me was that the sugar beets are a tremendous rotation crop, Don, with potatoes. They're beautiful. And this was shown even later, that they're just a perfect rotation crop. So then I started getting excited about it. I mean, we're going to build a big plant, I'm going to run the big plant. And then we went out and started raising money for it. And that's where I started, I spent an awful lot of time in Washington, I was just set to be- . . .
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I'll tell you a quick story about that, get a little lesson about the power of southern senators. Maine had the sugar beet allotment program, thirty three-thousand acres. And for some reason we forgot to either renew or testify in favor of it. It was something like that, I don't remember what the details were. But Freddy called me up, he says, "Jesus Christ, Johnny, get down to Washington." I says, "What for?" He says, "We got a problem with that sugar beet, we gotta get that thing going." So we called up . . . So I shoot down to Washington, see. And at the same time, this is jumping a little bit ahead, but we also had picked up a plant in Montezuma, New York that was originally owned by Pepsi Cola. Now, in those days, Don, the president of Pepsi-Cola was a guy named Don Kendall who was a good friend of President Nixon. And so, I was

getting nowhere. I mean, how the hell am I, I'm down there with a guy named Al Miliano from Searsport, Maine, you know. I go to USDA, and finally I called up one of my contacts at Pepsi. I said, "Freddy, give me a contact at Pepsi", and he give me this black fellow. I forgot his name. But he says, "I'll speak to Mr. Kendall, see what we can do."

So all at once I found out that he calls up, he must have called up Senator [Herman Eugene] Talmadge. And he says, "Go see Senator Talmadge", see. And I said, "What the hell do we want to see Talmadge for?" Never forgot this, so I walk in, I said, "Okay, I'll go." So I walk in, meet Herman Talmadge, remember that name? So I walk in and he's sitting in there. He says, "You got an interesting name, boy." And I said, "Yeah, Slavic name, Croatian, call it what you want, but my father was an Austrian." "Well that's good," he says, "you guys up there got a, want to get that allotment?" I says, "Yes sir." Then it's going through my mind: what the hell am I sitting here for? You know, I've got to do something. He says, "Okay," and he picks up the phone, never forgot this, and he says, he called up the second in charge, under secretary of Agriculture, and he says, "I got a nice boy here," called me boy, "named Johnny Cancelarich or something like that, tough name to pronounce, but look, when John gets there, just have pen in hand." I'll never forget that expression. So he says, "Go over there." I figured I got the run-around. So I walk in, finally found the under secretary's office, about the size of this house, just the office, walk in and, "Oh, are you Mr. Cancelarich?" The secretary takes me past everybody and I walk in and the guy signs some damn paper, hands me a paper, seals it and says, "You take this back to the Treasury Department", because they handled the allotments at that time. And that's how we kept the allotment one year on that.

But, I got a good lesson about politics from . . . Remember when Carter was President, the Secretary of Agriculture was Bob Berlin? Well, he came here with Arnie Roach, you know Arnie of course. So we're sitting in that dining room out there and I opened a bottle of wine. And we had a, I think I opened two bottles by that time. We were talking, he [Bob Berlin] says, "You know, you guys in Maine, John, you're just like the rest of the northern states." I says, "What do you mean?" He says, "We work hard but we're not that important in agriculture." And I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "John, seven states run agriculture, and he named California, Texas, Iowa, Illinois, Florida, . . ." and I forget the other, but I do remember Georgia. And I said, "How come Georgia?" He says, "Because of Talmadge." And he says, "You know, we go out there and you guys will sign a contract or work a deal with us and you'll believe it." He says, "I go out to California, the whole Sunkist organization agrees to something, the minute I walk out the door, they do what they want." And I don't know if he says that publicly any more, but, we had gotten into the sauce. But there's a lot of truth in that, that we forget in Maine how weak we are agriculturally. I mean, you look at even potato production. We're producing about three percent of the total potatoes grown in the United States. And I tell people, I says, "If you have one of your customers buying three percent of your product, how much attention do you really give them?" The answer is not much, see. But we're trying to make a comeback, but that's another story.

DN: What, in your view, what led to the collapse of the sugar beet project?

JC: Several things. Let's get right to the core. One was lack of farmer support. Prices went up

in potatoes. But that wasn't the only reason, that's a, you know, it's a wonderful reason. One was a complete lack of a unified management structure that we had. I mean, I would get up . . . I was in charge of not only sugar beets, I mean, worked with Herbie Knight, and he got a little help with the growing. We actually went out and grew the, grew sixteen thousand acres of sugar beets. Of course, the farmers wouldn't grow enough. We formed an agricultural company. We formed a fertilizer division. We bought, one day we bought over a hundred Ford tractors up here for the farmers. And then in the summer time we ran cane sugar; it was the only plant in the United States that ran both cane . . . We just did too many things and we didn't do them very well. We just spread ourselves way too thin.

And I can remember I was in the quality control and they started the plant. They had this guy running it and he just didn't know what he was doing. And he had set everything up with two twelve-hour shifts, seven days a week. And I said, "People won't work, that's eighty-four hours." And I said, "Here's the problem: if John Doe doesn't show up on the second shift, the first guy has to stay over and he's there twenty-four hours. And now he's back to his own shift. So theoretically he's going to be there for thirty-six hours." And, well, he finally figured out that was okay; I mean, that wasn't the answer. But it was just a question of . . . .

And the other thing was Freddy's volatility. I mean, it just, we were . . . Right down the road is a farm called the Shore Farm, which is right here, this cross road, the Bur-(?) Brook cross road here about a half a mile down the road. And we had investors out there, and I'd gone all over the country talking to investors. And we, there was a group from Solomon Brothers, see. And Freddy was up there and he says, "See these rows?" and he had all these investors . . . And I was standing next to this guy and he didn't know who I was, he was from Solomon Brothers. He [Freddy] said, "I planted all these rows myself," and, "see how straight they are?" Which was not true. But this was Freddy, you know, exaggerating and throwing out this stuff. And this guy leaned over to me, he says, "What the hell's the president, chairman of the board, doing on a tractor?" And they never put a penny in that company, Don, Solomon Brothers investment group, which tells you that, you know, this guy could read through all the hoopla and all the stuff like that. It was just too much. We just, we lived in a dream world, especially in, you know, some of the, some of Freddy's enthusiasm and stuff like that was infectious I would say.

DN: You've mentioned how much you like people here, and yet some of the problems with the sugar beet plant and some of the problems with the potatoes relate to patterns of behavior and attitudes?

JC: Yeah. There is a, in this particular area there is, you know, the greatest people in the world I say, but there is a built-in resistance to change. Where I noticed it, where I really noticed it was when I first was working here with the sugar beet growers. I went out to a meeting at Cornell University where the New York growers, because we had picked up the operation in New York state. And I'm listening to growers talk about cash flow, ion exchange in the soil, fertilizer levels under different conditions and stuff like that. And I said, "We got problems back in Maine." What I could see up there was completely, more of a technical, scientific approach to their problems and to their growing things which, you see it here, but you see it only in the successful growers and the thing is they keep it to themselves.

DN: Was it through the sugar beet project that you got to know Senator Muskie?

JC: Yeah. I had done some political work before that, see, but it's when Muskie got involved, that's when I, I got to know him, meet him an awful lot. He stayed up at the lodge up there, quite a few times, couple of times with Betty in fact. There was a, we even took barrels one time and he flew up in a private plane. I forget whose plane, maybe in the company plane, I don't remember. But we put in 'Welcome Senator'. We spelled it out, took hundreds of barrels. It drove me crazy having the guys do it, but we did it and we had the flat field.

But one incident that I found interesting was when, I have a habit, without thinking I do it, I'll grab someone's coffee, I'll grab a coffee and, without thinking, and start picking up, see. And the senator had a coffee and I took it, and emptied it. And he caught me on the second time. I wasn't doing it purposely, I was doing it out of pure habit. He says, "John, I don't mind you drinking my coffee, but when I get to that martini, I'll break your arm." So Jane remembered that story for quite awhile.

No, but we, you know, we, not we I guess, because I was pounding, I was working hard with the party trying to get elected, did a lot of work with Floyd. We were so tickled pink when the 102nd legislature was elected. That broke the back, remember, and that's when I first met George, you know, George Mitchell. George was working, I think the outfit was called Jensen and Baird. And Freddy says, "We're going to hire him because he worked for Muskie and he's a great tie into the senator who really sponsors these projects." This project would have been nowhere, it would have died if it wasn't for the senator. You know, if we had done things in a more responsible, technical and scientific way without the lunacy involved, I think we could have made this thing go. But that's how I met, that's how I really got to get involved with the senator, and also with George.

And George became, we hired George as our attorney. And some of the interesting stories about George was, the sensitivity George displayed when we reclassified the Presque Isle Stream. I don't know if you remember that. We made it into just short of an open sewer by going to class D, which of course, you know. That was world famous, that problem there, because they even ended up damming it up down in Canada and putting a monument up there, which still stands today, by the way. Every time I cross that border I stop to look at it and smile.

DN: What do you remember about George in connection with that problem?

JC: Extremely bright, extremely nervous, see. I used to tease him an awful lot at times. And I'd call up George and he, I'd say, "George, the Presque Isle Stream", and the pause. "Whoa, whoa, what, what?" I says, "It's clean, George, no problem." So he used to tell me, "Would you stop doing that? You're going to drive me crazy." But we had a lot of fun with George. But a very competent guy, I mean, just, you know, quick mind and tough guy, you know, much tougher than people realize. You would know it, much tougher than people realize. But he got nervous with Freddy. Freddy started just throwing . . . George had a sensitivity of people calling the senator or throwing his name around and stuff like that, and Freddy was awful in that respect.

Don, I got eight or nine calls a month from Freddy at different places. I'd pick up the phone, "Oh, hello senator." And of course I knew he was trying to impress the people in the damn room, see. So I would just, "Yes, yes, Fred", this and that. "Okay, Senator, look, we'll get together and have lunch when I fly down there," and stuff like that. So, but George, he was sensitive about that, and rightfully so. We had no right to go around tossing our name like that.

DN: When you, do you remember when you first met the senator in connection with political campaigns?

JC: Not, I don't remember the first time. I know that we contributed money to his campaign. And of course I was very active with the local party up here. And one thing about, once we got started, I could go anywhere I wanted to because Freddy would let me go. I'll tell you right up front, and it was on company expenses, too. I guess that's not too legal today, but the thing is that it was all company expenses. Even when I did the work for the Kennedy campaign, Freddy went sour on this, on the Muskie deal, that was all on company money, see.

DN: He just released you to . . . .

JC: Yeah, he, Freddy, I says, "Well I can help him there." "Well, yeah, do it, do it." Then the problem, we had the same problem, I think Senator Kennedy had the same problem that Muskie had, he started throwing his name around in embarrassing situations, you know, claiming that ...

End of Side One
Side Two

DN: This is side two of the first tape with John Cancelarich and we're talking about Occidental Petroleum and Arm & Hammer and the Vahlsing Company.

JC: One time Freddy, through a mutual contact at the new, one of the senior executives of Occidental Petroleum, had eventually wormed his way up to meeting Dr. Hammer and convinced him to make a personal investment, which it was a hell of a deal. And we ended up selling so much of the company to Arm & Hammer with options to get more. But in typical Arm & Hammer fashion he put some tough terms, covenants on and terms which we didn't meet. And then he exercised the option to pick it up, and even that, he dropped out. And in fact, Freddy had him so convinced that we could do magic that he even had some of our people over in Saudi Arabia looking at some of his operations out there. Al Miliano went over, and some of the people. We hired for a time his son-in-law who stayed with me for a little while. He was a real loser. And we picked up one of his transportation divisions, a small one, to transport vegetables from the east coast. And that's when Freddy bought that damn helicopter. We bought the jet first. I mean, we bought that damn jet Commander, and then we bought a helicopter. The same one that ended up taking his arm off, because Arm & Hammer convinced him that we were in a real estate deal.

See, we raised so much money, Don, that we, it was like there was no end to it. I could buy whatever I needed in the plant and then a few years later everything come to a screeching halt.

Well, you know, one thing people don't realize is that Freddy and I went out for a couple of years and we raised close to fourteen million dollars without an underwriter. And I gave speeches to the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ethnic Funds, and all these different funds and all that stuff, and then they jumped on board. And they would come here and buy stock and buy into our company, you know, their investment groups. But we, I think we abused a good thing with the senator really. We used his name much too often. Like he was . . . I remember when things went sour, you know, Freddy expected the senator to jump in. And by that time I think the senator got a feeling that he was, you know, this guy was a loose cannon, which he was.

DN: Now, Ken Curtis was involved in (*unintelligible - both speaking at once*).

JC: Yeah, Ken Curtis first started as a, I think I, he was with the Department of Commerce. And I think they called the, well, it was later to become the EDA, but I forgot what ...

DN: It was the Area Redevelopment Administration.

JC: Yeah, EDA, that's right. And that's the first time I met Ken and he did a hell of a job getting some loans through for us. And we were just tickled pink when he ran for governor and won. He's one of my favorite people, in fact. I really got to appreciate his style, and also his wife Polly. Yeah, I did work with Ken. We went to, I did, worked on a campaign with him, sat in, George was in a couple of those meetings where we talked strategy and things like that. And I claim that I was one of the guys that convinced him, and he never really picked the name out, but I pointed it out at one meeting with him. I says, "You know, Kennedy jumped on this new frontier, and stuff like that, and, you know, we ought to have something like that." So, I forgot, I don't know, it never really caught on with him. But it was obvious he was going to win after a while.

DN: You were deeply involved in the area redevelopment efforts here.

JC: Yeah, we helped them put the business plan together and did a lot of the informational work for them and things like that. And we used that as a leverage to obtain private monies, you know, equity financing.

DN: And at the same time you were deeply involved in party politics in the county.

JC: Yeah, yeah, at that time strictly in the county. Oh, statewide, I went to the state conventions when they were there, automatic election. And Johnny used to be elected, too, at that time. And I can remember, remember [Dr. Walter S.] Bud Schoenberger? Good friend of mine and Fred. When we got to know each other was later when he represented the McCarthy fraction and I worked on the Kennedy fraction. But years later Johnny got up at one Democratic convention, had a Bible in hand, gave a classic, you know, a classical speech or standard speech on abortion. And then, the guy figures, "Well, she's some ultra-rightist." And then about two hours later she gets up and gives a speech about unilateral disarmament, you know, throw the thing. And the guy says, "Wait a minute, is that the same lady?" And Bud Schoenberger's sitting there and he says, "That's John's wife." He says, "The more you learn, you'll appreciate

she believes in both things." See, in some cases she looks like an ultra-rightest, you know, and other cases she looks like a flaming liberal. But, hey, we're all different. But that was an interesting guy, old Bud. I really liked him. We did a lot of work together on the, this was when I was really working at the Kennedy camps. We didn't trust the McCarthy camps and vice-versa; they really mistrusted us. And Bud and I sort of developed a good relationship where I could actually talk to them. And some of the people in Boston were starting to say, "You better get John down there, to calm, you know, get a little peace with that group." There was another fellow down there, I can't remember his name, he was also a professor, nice guy, who was leading the group. And those are the two that I spent a lot of time with.

DN: This was a professor at the University of Maine?

JC: No, yeah, yeah, University of Maine at Orono, yeah, I can't remember his name.

DN: Now, this came to a head in the 1968 campaign.

JC: Yes, it did, yeah. See, I ran, I lost an election to Floyd Harding who ended up being the delegate by eight votes. And, you know, John Martin and everyone else, I mean, they wondered what the hell was I running for. But what I did, Don, was I got a hold of Freddy's plane. And the night before the vote I flew that plane back and forth from Augusta to Presque Isle picking up delegates. Brought them in that night and, boy, and I didn't run as a delegate, but I had a guy at Mars Hill, I can't remember his name but, an old-timer up there. But Floyd beat me by eight votes; he and Elmer and, I forget. The guys working against us were Chubb Clark and what's his name, the commissioner of Agricult-, I mean the commissioner of Fisheries, Glen Manuel. And then they went out to that horrendous time in Chicago, the '68 . . . .

DN: Did you go to the convention?

JC: No, no. I wasn't, I didn't get elected and I figured I better not go. . . .

DN: So in the 1968 state convention, you opposed the favorite son resolution?

JC: Yeah, I met with Bill Hathaway, who also opposed it if you remember. And he took a position, he had his own vote. I opposed it basically, I can't remember, I opposed it because of the position in the war. But there was also some, I don't know if you call it pressure or support, some of the Kennedy people were getting us to not to support the "favorite son" position, because they were concerned, they would like to weaken the senator's position at that time. Because, you know, Bobby [Kennedy] was going to be, things like that, see. So there was some pressure in there, I don't remember how it was, see. We had, we did an awful lot. I did much more contact when Ted was running, see. In fact we, during that time we had the President's son John as a house guest and we had Willy Smith, remember Willy? And then we had Peter Lawford's daughter, Vickie [Lawford], as a house guest. And we had, oh, about four, five. Well, one night we had sixteen guys staying here, but they were strictly, guys came up the last day to work. But we had most ...

DN: This was ‘72?

JC: Yeah, that’s right, that was the second time. In ‘68 I did an awful lot of hard work. And then it, you know, I’ll never forget the morning I called up Bob. Oh God, that shows my memory -- Bob, the hotel guy in Portland.

DN: Bob Dunfey.

JC: Bob Dunfey, yeah. And Bob was, you know, he was leading the state deal. I said, “What do we do?” He said, “Just sit tight”, and both of us sitting on the phone just about crying because, you know, I called him that day and said, “What do we do?” And that was about it, I mean on that campaign. And then I kind of got washed out, voted straight Democratic, but lost my enthusiasm for the, you know, lost my steam I guess is the better word.

DN: Now, when you say you lost your steam, was that after the ‘68 election or the ‘72?

JC: No, that was after the assassination.

DN: Okay.

JC: No, then I came back.

DN: The June.

JC: Yeah, I lost, I can’t remember. I worked with a guy named, I can’t remember, Jim something, I’m trying to remember his name. He was kind of, Bob was really the boss but, Bob Dunfey was really the boss, but it was a guy named Jim something that was running. He and I were very close and, got to know a lot of nice people.

DN: Now in that time in Maine, did you, in the debates over Vietnam and over the 1968 convention, did you have any direct encounters with Senator Muskie?

JC: Yeah, yeah, we of course, he was aware of it. And I think, hell, I even think someone like you, somebody from the office called me up and said, you know, “Relax, take it easy,” and, Awe want to talk to you,” and stuff like that. It may have been you for all I, I don’t really remember. But, yeah, we were getting carried, we were really concerned, we just felt something was wrong. And I remember going up, and I had a tough time. I mean, I was working with people, the Floyd Hardings were trying to say, “You know, John, don’t, you know, relax a little bit.” And I got carried away, there was no question about it. I took too many things too personal. John Martin, and we got into some shouting matches with . . . Floyd, no.

But I remember going up, and I thought I had a real break one time. I was trying to figure out where I could get speeches and we were very limited. And I finally got a thing to go speak to the John F. Kennedy College in Fort Kent, Maine. And I said, “Wow, this is great, I finally speak to a college.” When I went up there, Don, and John F. Kennedy College was a storefront, I don’t

know if you know that. So I went up there and the three kids sitting there, and I gave them the standard speech. I'm thinking, "Boy, I'm really going to have a problem." But, no, I just kept that position.

I was very close to the position that McCarthy had and the McCarthy people down in Orono had, and we got to be real friends after that; well, actually during that time. Most of the time when the McCarthy group and the Kennedy group had to speak it was . . . Bud and I would do the talking because they were concerned that most of the other guys they couldn't trust. You know, there was no trust for Kennedy out of the McCarthy group because, you know, you remember, he jumped in a little late after McCarthy made a good showing in New Hampshire. They felt that he was just riding on the senator's victories, and there was that sensitivity of, you know, and I noticed it. But that's what happened there. And we looked at, you know, we looked at Muskie as being on the other side, on the wrong side of this thing. But, and I mentioned that to him at the airport and I thanked him for something he did. I never forgot this, he went up, he gave a talk up at UMPI years later, much years later, and he talked about the stakes. He says, "Some of us were wrong in certain issues." And he pointed right to me, and he says, "And we appreciate those who had the guts to stand up." And I thanked him later. I even mentioned that when I was with him in Boston, that he did that.

DN: Now when was the UMPI speech?

JC: It was a meeting at UMPI. I don't know if it was a formal speech, but he was up there and was, and I know, you know, there were ten, probably fifteen Democrats up there. I don't know if it was a formal, you know, an invitational speech.

DN: Do you remember the year?

JC: Yeah, it was quite a few years later, yeah. I don't know if he was a senator at that time, I really can't remember. But I thanked him for that the last time I saw him in Boston.

DN: Did, in the 1968 period you felt he was on the wrong side. Did you feel that he was an active supporter of the war or that he simply wasn't coming out on that issue?

JC: The latter.

DN: The latter.

JC: Yeah, there was no question in my mind that, you know, this was not a guy who had the Nixon-Johnson approach to things. No, I just, you know, I look back now and I realize that I probably might have been right, but I don't know if my methods were right. Because I, you know, we got nasty and we were hostile. We were aggressive, we were, we just made a lot of trouble then. And I think what I ended up doing was probably helping the Republicans more than helping the Democrats in some of those days. Because I could have done a lot of work getting, you know, local guys elected, and I don't know how much work I really put in. I was just going crazy on this war, and that's what it amounted to; got carried away with it.

DN: When did you first become emotionally concerned over the war? Well, let me correct that. When did you first become concerned about the war?

JC: I think when it first started I was, you know, let's get it over with and stuff like that. And we've got to save, you know, we go in and let's clean it up. But then I was, I went to some meeting in New York on a, oh, I know what it was, I went down to, we had a problem with the FDA, former Food and Drug Administration. And I went down to New York City, I met first in Boston and then I went down to New York City trying to resolve a problem. They had seen some of our products, potato products. And I met some of my old friends in New York, see, and they were way on the other side. I mean, "Bomb Mao's foreign harbors" And I said to myself, "Wait a minute, there's something wrong here." They were very, you know, belligerent about getting the war over, bombing the hell out of it and get the hell out of there and stuff like that. And who the hell are they, you know? And for some reason that sort of little, it frightened me a bit. And we were drinking one time. I says, you know, to myself, I said, "There's got to be something wrong." And I think I started, that was probably the first thing, just the, you know, the ferocity of their attitude. And these were good friends of mine, I grew up with them. Guys that I still talk to and meet when I drop in to New York, see.

DN: Are they also professionals?

JC: Yeah, yeah, they're all, some of them are very successful, you know. Interesting crowd; we've done fairly well, all of us. We've been lucky.

DN: I get the impression that Johnny may have had an influence on you over the years on some of (*unintelligible phrase - both speaking*).

JC: Oh yeah, no question about it. For instance, Johnny, here, this is an example this week, Johnny . . . We're going to have a little meal in a little while and Johnny's going to be eating bread and water because she's on a bread and water deal for peace. She does one whole week just like that. She fasts two days a week where she doesn't take a drop of water or a piece of food on Wednesdays and Fridays. I don't know how she does it, I don't know. But, yeah, there's no question about it. Johnny's a pacifist, she has very strong views.

When Kitty Dukakis was here, Mike Dukakis was here, when Mike Dukakis was running, this was kind of funny. If you can remember, when he first got started he was about twenty points ahead of Bush and there was no question he was going to win. And I was saying to myself, "You know, maybe I ought to go to Washington," and stuff like that. I had a chance to go when Johnson was there. One of the guys in the USCA asked me about it and I said, "No." But Kitty Dukakis was here and a girl named Sue, I can't remember her last name, but big news, Kitty Dukakis being here with us. And she was with the Baldacci girl, I can't remember her first name. But she came up with her, John's [Baldacci] sister. So we, so Johnny's walking around, the picture's still up there. And she says, "Oh Kitty, this is my family." And so Johnny says, "This is this, and then, this is Joe," she says, Awe had a lovely Judaic-Christian wedding." Of course, Joe married a Jewish girl, see, and Kitty says, "Oh, that's interesting, my first husband

was Jewish." Now the cameras are running, Don, and Johnny looks at her, she says, "Kitty, your first husband? You've been married before?" She says, "Oh yes, Michael's my second husband." And Johnny says, "You're living in adultery, you have to go back to your first husband." So, I said, "Oh, God." So I walked over to the television girl, the commentator. I said, "Sue." She says, "I know what you're going to ask." I says, "You're not going to run that tonight?" She says, "No I won't but you owe me."

Well the next time, I got a hold of Kitty later. And I says, "Kitty, I want to apologize for Johnny." She says, "What for?" I says, "For that remark." She says, "John, I don't agree with it but," she says, "don't ever apologize to her for a remark like that because there's a lady telling me exactly what's on her mind. She means it, and I know exactly where she stands." She says, "I go through this country and all I see is all these matrons, they're going to do all this thing for me. The minute I walk out the door they do nothing or they've been lying to me." She says, "Don't ever apologize with anything like that." And I always remembered that, Kitty Dukakis told me that. We've had a lot of guests here. I told you, we had the President's son, we've had the Carter's son, we had . . . . Well, one of the most interesting guys I ever met, Don, was from South Carolina, a senator ...

DN: [Ernest Frederick "Fritz"] Hollings?

JC: Fritz Hollings, yeah, bright guy, bright guy. He come in here and he come in with Mike Carpenter. And they had told him about Johnny and he says, "I'll handle her, don't worry." So when he walked out, they said, "How'd you do with Johnny?" He says, "I thought she was going to hit me with a rifle, she threw a Howitzer at me." Because Johnny sees the world in black and white, there's no gray, see, but that's Johnny. But we had, we also had Vice President Mondale here. And one thing I learned, I don't know if you know it, but he's a Shakespeare scholar.

DN: I didn't know that.

JC: No, most people don't. And I said, well, I introduced him, we had people out there and I introduced him. What I do, Don, if you look back there you'll see those videos, a lot of them are Shakespeare plays. Well, when I can't sleep, I watch it. The nice thing about it is you can watch, on video tape you can watch, you know, one scene or one act or something like that and go back to bed. So a couple of nights before that I had watched The Merry Wives of Windsor. And I'd heard something I liked. Well, it's like anything else, I had the book in front of me so I stopped the tape and I wrote it down. I says, "That would be nice to use in my introduction to him." So I introduced him and I quote it, see. He spoke and he got me aside. He said, "John, let me ask you a question on that introduction. Is that from Shakespeare?" I said, "Yes, it is." He says, "You know, I'm a Shakespeare buff. I used it in my eulogy to, on Senator Humphrey in the Senate. And he said, "Where's that from?" I said, "The Merry Wives of Windsor." He says, "Oh my God," he says, "did you actually read that?" I says, "Yeah." He says, "And you quoted it?" He says, "John, I've met a lot of Shakespeare buffs, but I never heard anyone quote or even read the damn play." So anyway, that's, nice guy, bright guy. So he come over and I ended up supporting him.

And my son, well, here's another story. Lee Hart, that was Gary's wife? She was a house guest, she stayed here a couple of days. And she . . . Joe, the oldest son, was graduating from, graduated, excuse me, from Notre Dame, got his second degree. And it was one of those years, Don, where they just weren't hiring chemical engineers. So Joe was kind of hanging around with Lee Hart. Says, "What are you doing?" "Well, I'm looking for work and stuff like that." She says, "Joe, if you're interested, why don't you, we have the private plane here. Why don't you jump in the plane, come with us to Washington, and if you see, look around for a day with us. If you like the campaign we'll fly you back and jump in your car and we'll go someplace, and if you don't we'll fly you back anyway, no problem." So Joe says, "I'm going to try." Well, Joe's kind of reserved, more like Johnny than me, see. I've got two kids that act like me and two like Johnny; in fact they even look like us. I'm very dark-skinned, she's light-skinned, they're the same way. So Joe goes down to Washington, I mean, goes down to Washington, comes back, jumps in the car and takes off and starts going around the country. And he goes down to Lewiston-Auburn. Now, the guy running the campaign was, what's his name, the representative from there, Michaud?

DN: Mike Michaud?

JC: No, yeah, Mike, wait ...

DN: No, Mike Michaud's from Millinocket.

JC: No, no, that's the senator from Millinocket. He now works from the governor-, in the governor's office.

DN: Oh, Greg ...

JC: Greg Nadeau, good name. So what happens is, he's in charge of the Kennedy, of the Mondale campaign. And if you look at the thing, Hart carried Lewiston-Auburn, see, kind of embarrassing for Greg, of course. So anyway Mondale calls me up, he says, "John, what the hell happened?" I says, "Well, my son went down there." He says, "Can't you control your son for Christ's sakes?" And I says, "Fritz, can you control yours?" And he says, "I guess not," and he started laughing. So anyway, we lost the damn thing anyway. But what happened was Joe went out and he went all around most of the east coast. And one day in West Virginia he meets this girl who just graduated from Syracuse University, she's jumped on the campaign, too. And that's his wife today. See, that's the Jewish girl that Johnny was showing to Kitty Dukakis. And it's a great marriage, great marriage. When he didn't find, he didn't find out for about one year that he married into an ultra-wealthy family. So he's doing quite well. So there was some benefits from the Gary Hart campaign. I still think he would have been a good man, but that's history.

DN: Have your children stayed in Maine?

JC: Two have. One's right next door, set up, up there; she works for McCain's. Another one

lives up in Fort Kent, he married a Fort Kent girl. What's interesting, Don, of the four children -- six months ago, all four were working for foreign-owned corporations. Joe is working for Cibe Geige (Sp?) which is Swiss, the second son, Paul, was working for Unilever, which is Dutch and English, the third one was working for McCains, or actually Day & Ross which is Canadian, and the fourth one was working for Bayer, you know, the aspirin people, in their pharmaceutical division. So four out of four were working for foreign-owned corporations which tells you it's a global economy now. Things have changed. It's not what it was when I grew up.

DN: And they're all in companies working either pharmaceuticals or food.

JC: Yes, yeah, that's right, they are. Well, actually Paul in chemical. Paul spends a lot of time at the paper company. His wife is also a biologist there, he married one of the Theriault girls from Fort Kent. So they have a nice house overlooking the river up on what they call the Frenchville Road. The road that goes, One, Route One, which goes down there heading toward Madawaska. And Joe lives in New Jersey, and Johnny lives in Boston. So he's the only one not married.

DN: As you look back and ...

JC: One thing I might add, that's my biggest regret, you know, in life, that I didn't have eight kids instead of four. If you had to ask me what's your biggest regret in life, and that's no question, instant answer.

DN: Johnny feel the same way?

JC: No question about it. Yup, sure does. Ask her tonight when you see her.

DN: Now, as you look back over the political experience here in Maine, what's your impression of Senator Muskie's influence on the Democratic Party in the short run, that is, '54 to roughly '68, and since then?

JC: He made us national. He made us think beyond Maine, is the way I look at it. He made us realize that we're part of a big organization called the United States of America, politically. I mean, we always were agriculturally and travel and stuff like that. But the thing that, see, when I started getting involved in this thing, all at once I started becoming aware: Vietnam, agriculture, the economy, stuff like that. Things that, you know, I knew they were out there but I wasn't concerned about it. I was more concerned about what's happening in Presque Isle, Maine, see. And I think the senator opened up that because his presence and the fact that he was a worldly man. The world knew him. You know, he established himself and he carried us.

You know, one of the, sometimes, it's like, in New York City they used to have these ferries, Don. They would go back and forth, see. And there was a guy named Frank Hague[1]. He used

[1]Frank "Boss" Hague (1876-1956), mayor of Jersey City, NJ, 1917-1947.

to be mayor of Jersey City. And he said, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt is the ferry and the rest of us are the flotsam and jetsam that the tide brings in behind the ferry," you know, the cans, the floating beer bottles and stuff like that. He said, "Don't worry, as long as the ferry keeps going." Well, that's the way the senator was. He was our ferry, carried us all. We didn't understand it at that time, but he did.

Now, I, here's a classical example, or an example. Bill Hathaway I thought could be in that position, never achieved it, never got it there, see. Now, he never left Harvard in some respects. I walked in to . . . Remember Al Gamache? He was running the campaign. I knew in fifteen minutes we were going to lose the campaign. We were using all this theoretical crap, approaches to crap, it wasn't going to work. And when I told Freddy that, "Oh, no, we're going to win." Because we had beat Senator Margaret Chase Smith at that time, which was a great upset of course. But I knew that was going to happen, I could just see it. I spent fifteen minutes with Al, I spent the whole day with him. But in fifteen minutes I knew we were finished, just the way we were approaching it. But, no, I think the senator made us think nationally, get out of Maine.

DN: What changes have taken place in Aroostook County where you have settled in the thirty-six years that you've been here?

JC: One thing of course is the potato industry's diminished to the extent where it's not really a viable factor over all. One called it, I'll give you an example how that was, it hit me right between the eyes. I worked, when one of my companies that I worked for went bankrupt, I was put in charge with Dana Connors and some other people. We went out all over the country and finally ended up convincing Simplot (*sounds like*) to sell the plant. And the stipulation was, we'll buy it but John's got to run it for us. And I said, "Fine." So they gave me a hell of a nice sweetheart deal. And then I ran it and then I left it, went up to Colby because a bunch of farmers were in trouble, they convinced me. And I had a sweetheart deal with Simplot, but, here, here's another example what Johnny says. Johnny says, "John, those farmers helped us when we were in trouble years ago, you better go help them." That's why I'm down in Massachusetts, but that's another story.

But, so anyway, I called up, I got to know these Simplot people fairly well and last year I called them up and I says, "What's the plan?" [the guy's talking to me about] things in Idaho and Washington, Oregon, North Dakota where they have operations and stuff like that. And they gave me the acreage and the quality of crops and stuff like that. I sit on the Maine Potato Board, so, and of course as a process I'm interested in stuff like that. And then I said, "In Maine." And the guy said to me, "John, we're not interested in Maine any more. I know it's a nasty thing to say, but I'm just telling you." Now that hit me right between the eyes coming through the telephone, see. And it just tells you, in business, Don, when your competitors don't worry about you, you're in trouble. And I try to tell people like that, see, up here, that we're in trouble, especially because our competitors don't even worry about us any more. They figure we're screwing up bad enough by ourselves. I think we're coming back slowly, but, you know, I'll be dead before this thing turns around too long.

In fact, when they talk about, they talk about, you know, how much, being around too long, I like

to tell the story about my grandson. I went over there and Gizzard, my daughter, that's her nickname, she's having a fight with Jonathan, yelling at each other. I said, "What's the problem?" She says, "Oh Joshua wants to go to town and I took him an hour ago and he wants to go back." And I says, "Well look, I'm going to town and I'll take him." She says, "Okay but bring him back." So we're driving into town, he says, "Grampy, I appreciate you taking me into town." And I says, "Josh, that's nice," I said, Abut when you get your driver's license, you can take me in, drive me in." He says, "Grandpa, you'll be dead by that time." So I tell people that whatever the project I enlist on, I want to get it before Joshua gets his driver's license. I told Governor King that story and he says, "John," he came over, he patted me on the shoulder, he says, "John, you'll be happy to read, to learn that we're going to raise the driving age one year." So he gave me an extra year of life.

But, you know, you, what have I learned up here, one thing that, I've learned that, damn decent people in Maine. Decent people all over, but up here it's so easy to recognize. In New York, I recognized when I was there, but most outsiders don't recognize it in New Yorkers but they recognize instantly in Maine. I travel an awful lot and, you know, Maine, it, nothing but positive things about the way they were treated here. Oh, sure, some guy might get stuck somewhere and stuff like that, but. And they're helpful. Like, you know, the story I told you about the guy bringing the chicken. I had guys working in here not wanting to take a paycheck, because I was building my house, because I had hired them and helped them and stuff like that. You know, we planted three quarters of an acre. We never, we gave away that whole crop, we never charged a penny for it. And we get it back in spades, I mean, we get people, whenever I need something, I get it. I don't know how, people remember we did this or did that for them. Especially Johnny, she's the one. She hasn't bought a dress in twenty years. People give her a dress, because they remember what they're for, stuff like that. And that's what Maine is, a great place to raise kids. My biggest, most negative thing is my kids can't come back here and work. We just don't have professional jobs like that. Which, you know, I guess that's life. You can't have both. If we had so many professional jobs, we'd probably have a New York City, or Portland, Maine. Well, Portland's a great city, I shouldn't say that. But it's a great place, great place, great people. They've been awful good to me.

You know, here's, what the hell, I went, I leave here, Don, and I go to jail for eighty-nine days. I come back, outside of a couple columns from John Day over at the, and people like that, or whoever it used to be, the *Bangor Daily News*, no negative. And here's what happened. The president of Maine Public Service calls up *Bangor Daily News* and says, "Look, you keep writing that stuff, Hazes --" that it, I don't know if you knew that name. He called up, told them, "You keep writing that stuff, I'll stop every damn advertisement you'll ever see in this paper from my company. We know John and he's one of us up here." So that's the type of support you get, you know. Now, if I was, Caldwell, he wrote some interesting articles about me. He called me the Robin Hood of the pharmaceutical industry, stuff like that. And, you know, he got a copy of the book they wrote about me called <u>The Million Dollar Bug</u> [*sic* Bugs]. It's an interesting book, shows you what I did. Didn't seem to bother anyone. When I had to take this company out of bankruptcy, some of my, some of the creditors brought that up. And Judge Goodman, he's a bankruptcy judge, he threw it right out, said, "What do I care? Can John do the job?" The creditor's committee said, "Yeah." He says, "That's all I care. I don't care what his

background is. He's a chemical engineer and he can do a job." And they approved the contract, see. So, that's what you see up here.

DN: Thank you very much.

JC: My pleasure.

End of Interview

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